

Haftarah of Ekev – Isaiah 49:14-51:3

chantable English version by Len Fellman

based on the translations of Aryeh Kaplan, the Stone Edition Tanach, I.W. Slotski, W. Gunther Plaut, and The Jerusalem Bible

49:14 And Zion said: “[I’ve been forsaken] by YHWH. My Lord (Adonai) has forgotten me.”

15 [Does a woman] forget [her nursing baby], [does she not cherish] [the child of her womb]? [Even these] may forget, but I would not forget you.

16 Behold: on my palms [I have engraved you]; your walls are before Me continually.

17 They hasten—your children. Your destroyers and despoilers, from you depart.

18 [Gaze around you] with your eyes and see: [They all] have gathered—[coming to you]. As I live, [so says YHWH], that [with them all] as your jewels [you will wear], [and tie them on], like a bride.

19 For your ruins and the desolate places, and the country that is destroyed:

Because it will now [be too small] for your masses, [and far from you], [will be those who swallowed you].

20 Soon [they will say] [in your ears]—the children of your bereavement: “Too small is this place for me; give me space to live in.”

21 [And you will say] [this in your heart]: “[Who has borne] to me all these?

For I was bereaved, and alone; exiled [and wandering]. And these: who [has raised them]?

[Because indeed] I was left all alone. These, where are have they come from?”

22 [This is what says] Adonai Elohîm (YHWH): Behold, [I will raise] [toward the nations] my hand, [and to the peoples] I will raise my banner.

[They will bring] your sons to their bosom, [and your daughters] on their shoulders will be carried.

23 It will be that kings [will be your attendants], [and their queens] your nursing mothers,

[Keeping their faces] [to the ground], [they will] [bow down to you], and the dust of your feet, they will lick. [And you will know] that I am YHWH. [They shall know no shame], [those who hope in Me].

24 Is it snatched from the warrior, the spoil? Or captives of a tyrant*, be freed? *`aritz: cf. Robert Alter

25 [For thus in fact] proclaims YHWH: [Even the captives] of a warrior [will be taken], and the spoil of a tyrant snatched away.

[With those who fight you] I myself [will fight], [and your children] I will deliver.

26 [I will feed] your oppressors [with their own flesh]. [As with sweet wine], on their blood [they shall be drunk],

[And they will know]— [all humankind] (all flesh)—[that indeed] I am YHWH, I am your savior, and your redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

50:1 For thus is the word [of YHWH]:

Where [is it to be found]: the bill of divorce of your mother, by which [I dismissed her]? Or, who is My creditor, to whom I [have sold you]?
Rather, [for your own crimes] [you were sold], [for your own faults]—was sent away your mother.

2 Wherefore did I come and there [was no one there]? [I called and I called], with none to answer.

Is it short, too short my hand to redeem? Do I lack the power to save? Behold: [at my rebuke] [I can] [dry up the sea],
[make of] the rivers a desert, [making foul] the fish for lack of water, [and they die] from thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens in blackness, and sackcloth I make their covering.

4 Adonai *Elohim* (YHWH) [has given] to me the tongue of the learned, [so I should know how] to sustain the weary with words.
[He wakens me] | morning [after morning]. He wakens [in me] my ear, to hear, as a disciple.

5 Adonai *Elohim* (YHWH) has opened my ear, and I gave [no resistance], nor backward did I turn away.

6 My back [I gave to those] [who strike me], and my cheeks [to those who pluck the beard]. My face I [did not hide] from insult and spitting.

7 For the Lord *Elohim* (YHWH) [is a help to me], and so I was not disgraced.

[And so too], [I have set] my face like flint. I know I will not be ashamed.

8 Nearby is my champion. Whoever would contend with me, let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him approach me.

9 For Adonai *Elohim* (YHWH) [will help me]. Who is he [that would condemn me]?

For they all, like a garment, [wear out]. The moth [shall eat them away].

10 Whoever [among you] that fears YHWH, [let him listen] to the voice of His servant.

[Even though he may] | have walked in darkness, with no light [for himself], [let him trust] in the name of YHWH. [Let him lean] on his God.

11 Behold, [all of you] who ignite a fire, who kindle the sparks: [you should surely walk] | into the blaze [of your own fire],
[into the sparks] [you have lit]. [From My hand] [this has this come] upon you. In sorrow [you will lie down].

51:1 Listen [now unto me], pursuers of righteousness, seekers of YHWH.

Consider the rock [you were hewn from], the hollow of the pit [from which you were dug].

2 Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah [who gave you birth]. [He was alone] [when I called him], [and I blessed him] and increased him.

3 For consoled by YHWH [is Zion], comforted all of her ruins, [and has made] her wasteland like Eden,

and her wilderness [like the garden of YHWH]. Gladness and joy [will be found] in her, [final melody:] thanksgiving, and the sound of music.

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

| | | |
|------------------|--|--------------------------|
| mercha/tipcha | kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.) | mercha siluk |
| (Renew our days) | (She weeps bitterly). | (a fire-offering to God) |

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)